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DOLE-MONDALE DEBATE AFTERTHOUGHTS
(TAPE INSERTS IN LIBRARY)

EDITORS: FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS FROM VOA DISCUSSION WITH JAMES SUNDQUIST, BROOKINGS INSTITUTION AUTHORITY ON AMERICAN POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS, AND STEPHEN KELLER, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF SPEECH AND DRAMA AND HEAD OF DEBATE ACTIVITY AT GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERRSSIITY:

ON THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE DOLE-MONDALE APPEARANCE AND THE FORD-CARTER DEBATES:

SUNDQUIST: "WELL IT WAS A MUCH SHARPER CONFRONTATION. WHAT THESE TWO CANDIDATES BROUGHT OUT WAS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE PARTIES BECAUSE YOU HAD AN ORTHODOX CANDIDATE IN THE NEW DEAL TRADITION IN WALTER MONDALE, AND YOU HAD A VERY SHARP EXPONENT OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY PHILOSOPHY IN SENATOR DOLE. IN THE PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES, THE PARTY DIFFERENCE GOT SUBSTANTIALLY FUZZED, BECAUSE GOVERNOR CARTER HAS BEEN RUNNING AS A MODERATE, REALLY. HE'S BEEN IDENTIFYING HIMSELF IN HIS LANGUAGE WITH ROOSEVELT, TRUMAN AND THE GREAT SOCIETY OF LYNDON JOHNSON. BUT WHEN IT COMES DOWN TO WHAT HE SAYS ON THE ISSUES, HE DOESN'T SOUND THAT WAY. MONDALE DID."

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ON THE ACCEPTABILITY OF THE DEBATE STRUCTURE.

KELLER:

"THE CLASH OF IDEAS IS REALLY THE HALLMARK OF DEBATE, AND IN THAT SENSE THE VICE PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE WAS MORE CLASH-ORIENTED THAN THE PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES BECAUSE IN THIS DEBATE IN ESSENCE WE HAD AN ANSWER BY A CANDIDATE, A RESPONSE BY HIS OPPONENT AND THEN AN EXTENSION BY THE INITIAL ANSWERER, WHEREAS IN THE

PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES OF COURSE WE JUST HAD AN ANSWER AND A RESPONSE. SO WE'RE CARRYING THINGS A STEP FURTHER HERE, AND I THINK THAT SHOULD KEEP THE CANDIDATES CLOSER TO THE ISSUES. IT DOESN'T ALWAYS DO THAT, BUT THERE'S MORE OF AN OPPORTUNITY TO."

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ON THE QUESTION OF TELEVISION AS A PERSUASION FACTOR IN THE DEBATE:

KELLER:

"THE PERSONALITIES OF THE SPEAKERS IS NOT THE FOCAL POINT IN RADIO AS IT IS IN TELEVISION. WE DON'T GET TO SEE THE IMMENSE DIFFERENCE IN PERSONAL STYLES -- THAT OF SENATOR MONDALE ALMOST PREACHING, THE CONSTANT JABBING AND FEIGNING THAT DOLE GOES THROUGH IN ANSWERING HIS QUESTIONS. THAT'S NOT QUITE AS APPARENT. (THOSE THINGS DON'T SCORE POINTS IN A DEBATING COACH'S MIND), BUT THEN AGAIN THE AMERICAN ELECTORATE PROBABLY VIEWS THEM DIFFERENTLY. I THINK BOTH CANDIDATES FEEL THAT THIS IS TO A LARGE EXTENT AN IMAGE CONTEST. THAT'S UNFORTUNATE. THAT'S ONE OF THE PROBLEMS, ONE OF THE IMPACTS THAT TELEVISION HAS HAD ON OUR SOCIETY. IT'S VERY QUESTIONABLE WHETHER OR NOT AN ABE LINCOLN COULD EVER HAVE BEEN ELECTED IN THIS KIND OF A SITUATION. THE DEBATE COACHES THAT WERE SURVEYED BY A.P. GAVE THE DEBATE FOUR-ZERO TO MONDALE. I DOUBT THAT THE GENERAL ELECTORATE WOULD HAVE BEEN THAT OVERWHELMING. I HAVE THE FEELING THAT TO A LARGE EXTENT PARTISANS ARE GOING TO BE PICKING OUT COMMENTS BY THE CANDIDATE THAT THEY LIKE AND NODDING, AND WHEN WE HEAR SOMETHING FROM THE CANDIDATE WE DO NOT LIKE WE AUTOMATICALLY DISCOUNT IT."

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ON THE QUESTION WHETHER THE DEBATES PLACE TOO MUCH FOCUS ON THE STYLE AND PERFORMANCE OF THE CANDIDATES IN A QUICK-THINKING SITUATION:

SUNDQUIST:

"WHAT WE ARE ELECTING IS NOT A SINGLE INDIVIDUAL. WE'RE ELECTING A WHOLE PARTY, A TEAM OF PEOPLE, AND THE VICE PRESIDENT IS IMPORTANT AND THE MEMBERS OF CONGRESS ARE IMPORTANT, TOO. ONE OF THE DIFFICULTIES OF THE DEBATES IS THE FOCUS ON THE PRESIDENT AS AN INDIVIDUAL AND THE ILLUSION IT FOSTERS, THAT HE REALLY DOES RUN THE COUNTRY."

KELLER:

"OBVIOUSLY THE PRESIDENT HAS ADVISORS, ET CETERA. BUT THE TEAM THAT YOU SPEAK OF IS PICKED LARGELY BY THE PRESIDENT. AND TO THE EXTENT THAT WE'RE GETTING INSIGHT INTO THE WAY THE MAN THINKS UNDER PRESSURE, WE ARE GETTING VALUABLE INSIGHTS. NOW CLEARLY, I'M NOT SAYING THAT THAT'S THE ONLY THING A PRESIDENT DOES. BUT I FEEL THAT HIS ABILITY TO DEAL WITH ISSUES AS THEY COME UP AND TO THINK ON HIS FEET IS AN IMPORTANT ABILITY. IT'S NOT THE ONLY ONE."

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LOOKING TOWARD THE LAST OF THE DEBATES, ASSESSING THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE DEBATES HAVE TAKEN UNDUE ATTENTION FROM THE OVERALL CAMPAIGN PROCESS:

KELLER:

"I THINK FOR INSTANCE THE MISTAKES THAT A CANDIDATE MIGHT MAKE BECAUSE HE IS UNDER A LOT OF PRESSURE ARE VERY UNFORTUNATE WHEN HE MAKES THEM IN THIS KIND OF A SPOTLIGHT. PRESIDENT FORD'S STATEMENT ABOUT EASTERN EUROPE: NOW IT'S CLEAR TO ME FROM SURVEYING THE MAN IN THE OFFICE OF PRESIDENT

OVER TWO YEARS THAT WE DO NOT FULLY ACCEPT SOVIET DOMINATION. BUT AT THE SAME TIME HE MAKES THE STATEMENT THAT SUGGESTS THAT WE DO AND IT BECOMES HIGHLIGHTED, AND WHAT WE HAVE HERE IS A FOCUSSING ON THE RHETORIC OF THE MOMENT, AS OPPOSED TO THE LONG DISTANCE TRACK RECORD OF THE CANDIDATE. AND THAT'S WHY I THINK BOTH CANDIDATES APPROACH THESE DEBATES WITH SUCH TREPIDATION; CAUTION BECOMES THE HALLMARK OF THE DEBATES.

BUT IN THIS LAST DEBATE THAT WE'RE COMING INTO I AM LOOKING FOR FORD TO BE EVER MORE AGGRESSIVE. HE IS STILL BEHIND IN THE POLLS. HIS SURGE SEEMS TO BE OVER, AND MANY MORE IN THE ELECTORATE HAVE MADE UP THEIR MINDS. SO FORD IS GOING TO HAVE TO SHAKE LOOSE SOME VOTES, AND OF COURSE IN DOING SO HE MIGHT WIND UP MAKING ANOTHER MAJOR MISTAKE. I THINK SOME OF THE CONFIDENCE IS RETURNING TO THE CARTER CAMPAIGN. WE'RE GETTING CLOSE TO THE ELECTION, AND THOUGH HE'S NOT VERY FAR AHEAD, HE STILL SEEMS TO BE AHEAD. AND CARTER PROBABLY WILL BE VERY CAUTIOUS AGAIN, AND HIS CAUTION MIGHT CAUSE HIM SOME DIFFICULTIES AS IT DID IN THE FIRST DEBATE."

SUNDQUIST:

"I THINK THAT'S RIGHT. WHETHER YOU'RE CAUTIOUS DEPENDS ON WHETHER YOU'RE BEHIND OR AHEAD. THE TRADITIONAL WISDOM HAS BEEN THAT AN INCUMBENT PRESIDENT DOESN'T DEBATE, BECAUSE EVERYBODY KNOWS HIM AND IT'S UP TO THE CHALLENGER TO ESTABLISH HIMSELF AND WHY GIVE THE CHALLENGER ALL THAT FREE AIR TIME? BUT FORD KNEW AT THE TIME OF THE CONVENTION THAT HE WAS BEHIND, SO HE HAD TO TAKE RISKS AND HE HOPED THAT HE COULD SHOW CARTER

UP AS UNINFORMED AND INEXPERIENCED. THAT PRETTY WELL SUCCEEDED IN THE FIRST DEBATE. THEN CARTER REALIZED THAT HE WAS SLIPPING, SO HE WENT ON THE ATTACK. FORD BECAME CAUTIOUS AND CARTER WAS ABLE TO NEEDLE FORD INTO MAKING A MAJOR BLUNDER. I WOULD AGREE THAT IN THE NEXT DEBATE CARTER'S PROBABLY GOING TO PLAY IT SAFE AND NOT TAKE TOO MANY CHANCES AND FORD'S GOING TO TRY TO NEEDLE CARTER AND GET UNDER HIS SKIN, AND BE ON THE AGGRESSIVE. SOMEBODY SUMMED UP THE CAMPAIGN THE OTHER DAY AS A CONTEST BETWEEN FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN AND FEAR OF THE KNOWN."

RK/PBRM